

VLR-9/18/73 NHL-4/15/70

137-33

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THEME: ARCHITECTURE

STATE:	Virginia
COUNTY:	Independent City
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

1. NAME	
COMMON:	James Semple House
AND/OR HISTORIC:	James Semple House

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Francis Street: South side, between Blair and Waller Streets			
CITY OR TOWN:		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
Williamsburg		001	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Virginia	51	Independent City	830

3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress 	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment 	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum 	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific 	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME:			
Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. Carlisle H. Humelsine, President.			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE:	CODE
Williamsburg 23185		Virginia	51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:			
Clerk of the Circuit Court, James City County			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Court Street (2 blocks south of Duke of Gloucester St.)			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE	CODE
Williamsburg		Virginia	51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY:			
Historic American Buildings Survey			
DATE OF SURVEY:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
Library of Congress			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Capitol Hill			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE:	CODE
Washington		D.C.	11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
VirginiaCOUNTY:
Independent CityFOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The James Semple House is a frame house with clapboarding, having a two-storey rectangular center section with pedimented gable roof, gable-end to the front, and two interior end-chimneys. The entrance is a Roman Doric porch, with dentil pediment and eaves, and a remarkable guilloche on its architrave, a feature probably suggested by The Builder's Companion of William Pain, published in London in 1765.

Flanking the center are one storey wings with gable roofs to the side. They too are frame, with clapboarding, containing the dining room to the east, and a large drawing room to the west. In the center section, originally, was a large salon with a fireplace at the west side. In the nineteenth century, a partition was set up to subdivide the room, forming a narrow east-west hall between the wings.

The two small bedrooms in the upper level of the center section are reached by a narrow, steep, and winding staircase, contained in the East wing of the house, concealed behind the chimney in a manner similar to that used in the drawings for the first Monticello. Indeed, authorship of the design of the Semple House is often ascribed to Thomas Jefferson, who was a resident of Williamsburg when the house was constructed c. 1770-1780. Jefferson's first drawing for Monticello (1768), according to Waterman, "parallels the design of the Randolph-Semple House to such a degree that there can be no doubt that they are by the same author."

The Semple House lies at the far eastern end of Williamsburg, in fact, east of the Capitol which is the eastern terminus of the Duke of Gloucester Street east-west axis. The house was acquired and restored by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 1932, after it had passed through the hands of several owners in the nineteenth century. It had been changed little, but had fallen by 1932 into some state of disrepair. The east chimney was rebuilt, as were the front porch steps. On the porch, square piers were removed and replaced with columns. The guilloche on the architrave was restored after traces of the original. A wing attached to the south of the center block, added 1806-1823, was also removed. The nineteenth century hall partition remains in place.

The Semple House, fortunately, is another of those in Williamsburg whose eighteenth century boundaries may still be followed on surviving deed records and maps. This then is the basis for the most reasonable boundary for this Landmark now.

Interestingly, a portion of Williamsburg was laid out according to a system of 5-pole measurements, the age-old measure deriving from medieval agricultural methods. A pole being approximately 5 1/2 yards, a 5-pole lot then would be about 82 1/2 feet. The maps show that the eighteenth century property lines of the James Semple House begin at a point on Francis Street 247.5 feet (15 poles) west of Waller Street, continuing east-west for 165 feet (10 poles). This is two lots, and they were never numbered. The lot

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Virginia	
COUNTY Independent City	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description second page

line runs back from the east-west line 264 feet, exactly 16 poles.

Colonial Williamsburg has constructed a number of small buildings on these four lots. None of them are original therefore. A small kitchen building a few feet to the east of the James Semple House is the only other original building on the site.

The house is still owned by the Colonial Williamsburg corporation and is used as a residence for one of its executive employees. It is well maintained, but not open to the public. The boundary line set by Colonial Williamsburg around the property is co-extensive with the historical justification just delivered.

9. SIGNIFICANCE**PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- ☐ Pre-Columbian ☐ 16th Century ☒ 18th Century ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century ☐ 17th Century ☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1770-1780

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The James Semple House is an excellent example of Palladio's "Roman Country House" adapted for use as a frame townhouse. It is a distinguished and early example of the classicism which began to change the American architectural scene towards the end of the 18th century. Its beauty derives largely from its perfect proportions, enhanced by delicate classical detailing. Although there is disagreement among architectural experts, the authorship of the design of the James Semple House is often ascribed to Thomas Jefferson, who was a resident of Williamsburg when the house was built c. 1770-1780. Its design has a remarkable affinity to those done by Jefferson for his first Monticello in 1768.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Marcus Whiffen, The Eighteenth Century Houses of Williamsburg (Williamsburg 1960).
 Thomas T. Waterman, The Dwellings of Colonial America (Chapel Hill, 1950).
 Thomas T. Waterman, The Mansions of Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1946).
 Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).
 Edith T. Sale, Interiors of Virginia Houses of Colonial Times (Richmond, 1927).
 Richard Pratt, A Treasury of Early American Homes (New York, 1949).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds	LONGITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds		UTM	LATITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds	LONGITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "				
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				
				18.349860.4125980		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: One

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: James Dillon Architectural Historian	
ORGANIZATION National Historic Landmarks, Historic Sites Survey	DATE 10/16/74
STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L. Street, N.W.	
CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE D.C. CODE 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

((NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS))

Name _____

Title _____

((NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS))

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

((NATIONAL
LANDMARKS))

Landmark

Designated: Apr 15, 1974

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation date

((NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS))

Boundary Certified:

Date

Chief, Hist. & date

ATTEST:

Arch. Surveys

Boundary Affirmed:

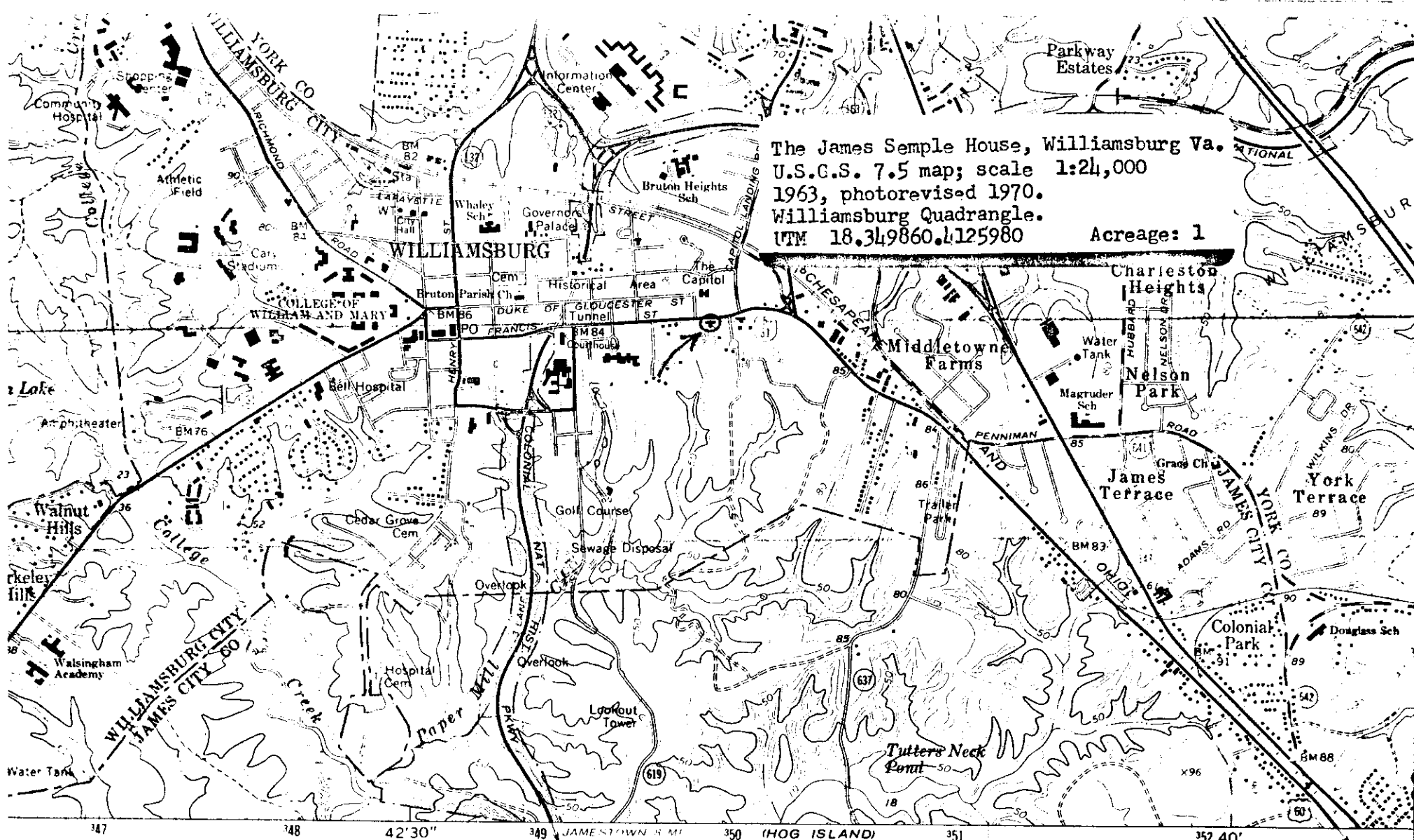
Keeper of The National Register

Director, OAHF

Date

date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



The James Semple House, Williamsburg Va.
 U.S.G.S. 7.5 map; scale 1:24,000
 1963, photorevised 1970.
 Williamsburg Quadrangle.
 UTM 18.349860.1125980

Acreage: 1

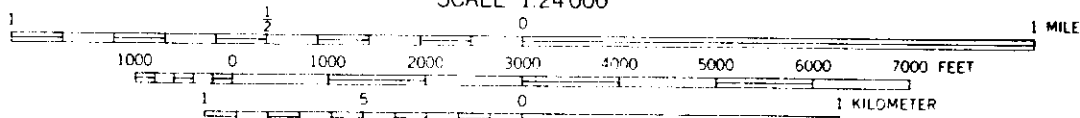
irvey

495 (1961)

h zone

UTM GRID AND 1970 MAGNETIC NORTH

6 1/2°
 116 MILS
 1° 01'
 18 MILS



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET

DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER

SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER

THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2.8 FEET